

Newsletter of the Institute for the History of Religions of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest

[1 | June 2022]

Bucharest | 1st of June 2022 | national holiday in Romania

Dear Colleagues,

I would first of all like to thank the Romanian Academy, our home, the previous and the newly elected Board consisting of the President, the Vice-presidents and the General Secretary, the President of the Section of Historical Sciences and Archaeology to which IHR belongs since its foundation as well as all the mentors, senior scholars, colleagues and indeed friends who kindly support our scholarly endeavour. As the academic study of religions was for the very first time institutionalized in Romania in 2008, despite all predecessors who expertly but individually defended and illustrated it during the last some 150 years, in our scholarly, cultural and social context the field is still somehow in its infancy. There is *e.g.* no proper University Chair, nor PhD and MA multiple programs *et c.* IHR contributes to these developments by offering two scholarly journals, a scholarly series, and the assorted expertise of all its past & present members and fellows. News on all these shall soon be communicated. This monthly Newsletter would like to highlight the current advances for the benefit of a wider public. The global community of scholars (as well as the Romanian community of taxpayers) deserves it. Perhaps especially now, when we were or are surrounded by the pandemic, the energy and economic crises, and the Russia's war at Romania's Northern frontier.

At present the Institute benefits from six research and three administrative positions, all permanent: economist, librarian and secretary as well as 1 C[ercetător]Ș[tiințific] I (similar to full Professorship in several university systems), 1 CȘ II (Associate Professor), 3 CȘ III (Assistant Professor) and 1 CȘ (Lecturer/Instructor). For completing a larger and finer team, we were fortunate to associate seven more affiliated members or fellows, one of them already obtaining as Principal Investigator a Romanian research grant for IHR.

Together with my immediate predecessor, Dr Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban, Director ad interim 2018-2022, I am happy to confirm the Institute will open this June **four permanent positions of researchers** in three departments, three academic levels (Cercetător științific, Cercetător științific III, Cercetător științific I) and a variety of topics, strongly related to the current or indeed new multiannual research teams of E.C.C.E.: *Ediția critică completă Eliade | The Complete Critical Edition of Mircea Eliade's scholarly works, 1921-1945* as well as *R.H.R. | Religious History of Romania, 1500-2000*. The official announcement of these positions and their requirements will be communicated on Friday 3 June and published as mandatory in the national press on Monday 6 June.

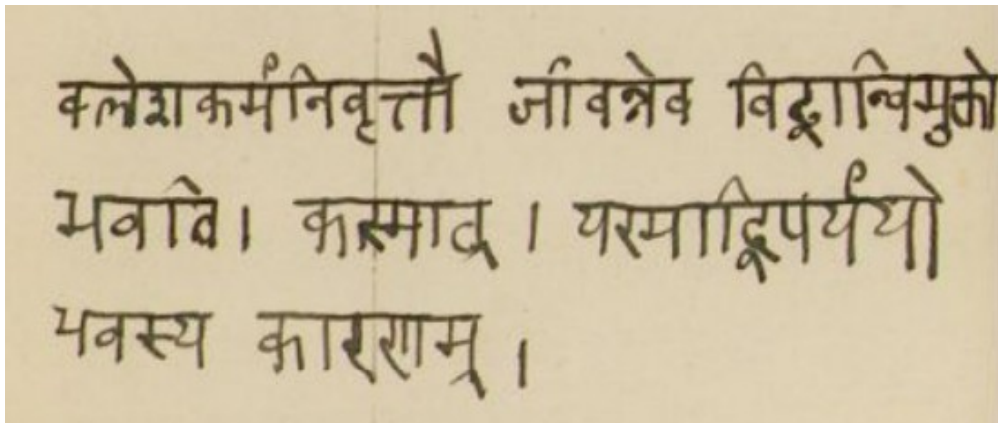
The second piece of good news consists of the second largest IHR donation I already obtained for and duly transferred to the Institute, which is roughly valued as 250,000 RON | 50,000 EUR. From December 2019 to March 2022, all *bona fide* scholars, public intellectuals, and aficionados have discovered that Mircea Eliade's Bucharest archive of manuscripts, mostly scholarly manuscripts from 1921 to 1940/1942-1945, has been auctioned by two auction houses in Bucharest by the (legally fully

confusing) successor[s] of Mircea Handoca (1929-2015), a B.A. editor (otherwise a high school teacher of literature with no basic knowledge of History of religions) of many Eliade works of all sorts. Mr Handoca has famously kidnapped and partially sold himself, as if being his own propriety! not of Eliade's nephew, Professor Sorin Alexandrescu (recently elected as honorary member of the Romanian Academy), three large cases of Eliade manuscripts containing most probably many thousands of pages. *Some* of all these were already auctioned in December 2019, April 2021, February 2022 and March 2022. Even less of them were indeed saved by being now placed in public institutions.

The initial breakthrough in such academic and cultural litigious matters was made on 7 April 2021, when the Romanian Academy acquired for its Library a most significant portion of Eliade manuscripts auctioned back then. Most details, with hundreds of articles, interviews, memoirs and several open letters, are available on <https://enescueliade.com/> (to Enescu's oeuvre from the point of view of History of religions I shall return soon while developing – with friends and colleagues musicians and musicologists – the project of SONO.R.E. | *Sonotheseism: Religion in Enescu*).

I am definitely happy to report now that in February-May 2022, being contacted by known and unknown readers of IHR publications and direct and indirect IHR benefactors and donors for a healthy academic and cultural life, I received **many dozens of recently auctioned Eliade manuscript pages** as well as other (of course non-auctioned) **manuscripts** from different collections, **in Sanskrit, Latin, German and French**, together with **consecrated *thangkas*** from Bhutan, Nepal and India, and **rare books** as the very first edition of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* or the most recent, eleven-volume edition of *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Herder Verlag). A full catalogue of IHR 2022- donations shall be made public in due course. As for the very donors, you will know their names if they will decide so. I don't know how they – I don't know personally all of them not even today – did this, nor how they managed to procure such remarkable funding and to contemplate IHR as the best home of all for such rarities.

Together with the largest part of IHR members now studying such manuscripts I intend to present to you a Catalogue of these Eliade manuscripts finally safe and sound in a public archive and library in the second instalment of this Newsletter. Just a hint as you all may be interested: IHR is now home not only of some of the most influential correspondents of the very young Eliade – luminaries such as Surendranath Dasgupta, A.K. Coomaraswamy or the providential Maharaja of Kasimbazar – but also his own *devanāgarī* exercises – have you ever seen such specimens?



This is to say: our Maecenases, donors and benefactors have saved for IHR not only manuscripts yet unpublished, but **manuscripts fully unknown, never mentioned once, never seen or read**. You may easily and rightly assume I am in awe: as the editor of the first critically edited book by Eliade, his much neglected PhD thesis on *Yoga. Essai sur les origines de la mystique indienne* (1936 | IHR 2016), I know these are among the *very last* manuscripts surviving from his India, as all the others related to the preparation of his first *Yoga* dreadfully burned within the premises of Central University Library in downtown Bucharest (where he used to read in his youth, where he donated in 1985 a foundational part of his Chicago library – „for future students of History of religions“) during the Romanian Revolution of 1989. Such **unique donations to IHR** will allow scholars of distinct interests – including perhaps scholars of literature, of Romanian cultural history etc. who are by now invited to be our guests – to truly improve the general knowledge of Indian and History of religions studies in interwar Europe. They moreover place now the Romanian Academy among the best holders of such treasures worldwide.

What we intend to do: to scholarly, critically, fully edit them, the sooner the better – to professionally scan all of them and make them freely available on our website, as an incipit in digital humanities for IHR – to organize with our institutional partners a chronological exhibition of such material remnants of an individual project in History of religions in Bucharest nearly one century ago. To put it bluntly: **to do what no institution or person did ever before, in Romania, in Europe or in the US. It would only be the collective, calm fulfilment of a duty.**

It is rather difficult to predict such things, yet as a rule the newsletters shall be communicated at the beginning of each month through our website address

[Institutul de Istorie a Religiilor – Academia Romana \(ihr-acad.ro\)](http://ihr-acad.ro)

and the Facebook | Meta Page of IHR I initiated on 23 March 2022 and invite you to like & follow

www.facebook.com/HistoryofReligionsBucharest

including mostly the research results of our team and other aspects of the public life of our Institute. The last Newsletter of this mandate, numbered XLVIII, should then be published with a bit of luck on the 31st of May 2026. Way to go!...

Thank you, indeed.
Eugen

Dr Eugen Ciurtin

Founding member | Research Professor (CȘ I) | Director of IHR (from 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2026).